

A Letter from Home

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Summary: Jean writes to Mattie after the arrival of Mei Lin.

A Letter from Home

Jean placed her cup of tea on the table, savouring the silence in the sunroom after so much recent turmoil.

She had the house to herself, and while she usually revelled in the company of her makeshift family, today she needed time to gather her thoughts.

Resting her perfectly embossed notepaper next to the cup, she settled in to write to Mattie. The younger woman owed her a letter given she'd only just sent one, but she needed to put some things to paper before she broke out of her carefully controlled, perfectly put-together exterior.

"My Dearest Mattie," she started, before drawing a blank.

How could she sum up the past few days in a letter? How could she write a letter that wouldn't be a tale of gloom and doom?

Taking a sip of tea, she carefully returned her cup to its saucer, stretching a little and putting pen back to paper.

"It is turning colder in beautiful Ballarat," she continued, "and that makes me miss you very much. The click-clack of my knitting needles sounds lonely without your accompaniment.

"Lucien continues to tease me about my fireside hobby, though, as usual, he has no complaints about the garments it delivers him. You will, however, be happy to know he continues to favour the cardigan you knitted him, longer left sleeve and all!

"I have taken to walking almost daily around Lake Wendouree, despite the cooling conditions. When I think of you in a snowy London winter, Ballarat seems positively mild, though I am sure I will change my

mind once the first frost settles.

"As I write, I am sitting in the sunroom, surrounded by my plants with the warmth of the Autumn sun streaming in. I have the house to myself, something I have craved for the past few days.

"I don't know where to begin to tell you of the turmoil the recent days have delivered.

"Lucien proposed. Or rather, he was about to. As he held out his mother's ring and I realised what was happening, my heart pounding, there was a pounding at the door. He thought it was Charlie and told me he would be right back.

"It wasn't Charlie, though. It was Mei Lin. His wife Mei Lin. Mrs Blake.

"Now I feel sick, Mattie. I feel sick that I allowed myself to become so fond of a married man, although I did think he was widowed. I also feel sick about the anger I feel towards Mei Lin for coming back.

"Mrs Blake spent one night in the house with us, in the guest room next to your room, before moving to the hotel. Lucien was aware of the awkwardness, and it seems that was his way of addressing it. I feel bad that she was displaced from what is her rightful home, but at the same time, relieved that we are no longer confronted with each other every moment.

"I suspect she knows. In fact, I am certain she knows. She eyes me with suspicion and asks me questions I can't in good conscience answer for her.

"I am left wondering where to from here? I am considering a clean break. Perhaps it is time to move permanently to Adelaide to watch little Amelia Jean grow up. Perhaps I could move to Melbourne, find work in one of the hotels there and explore what the big city has to offer.

"Whatever happens, things cannot stay the same.

"My personal issues aside, all is well here. Everyone misses you, and Lucien and I are so proud of you.

"Remember that we love you, and know that you have a home here whenever you choose to come back to Ballarat.

"I am enclosing a little piece of home for you to keep close to you at all times. When you look at it, think of us and our beautiful goldfields town.

"With much love, Jean."

She paused, pondering whether to send the letter or toss it into the fire.

Steeling herself, she picked up the small piece of gold leaf, borrowed from Lucien's mother's studio, placing it inside the folds of the paper, before sealing the envelope.

Decision made, she stood, shrugging on her jacket, to stay warm on the walk to the post office.

Mattie would be distressed for her, but would understand the need to put her thoughts to paper.

She hoped that come her next turn to write, she would have some resolution to this awful predicament.

End
file.